THE U.S. GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) was mandated by Congress in the Global Change Research Act of 1990 (GCRA) to "assist the Nation and the world to understand, assess, predict, and respond" to processes of global change—including changes in climate, land productivity, oceans and other water resources, and ecological systems—that may alter Earth's capacity to sustain life.[1] USGCRP coordinates research across 13 Federal agencies (Figure 1) to improve understanding of human-induced and natural processes of change that influence the total Earth system: the atmosphere, land, water, ecosystems, and people.

USGCRP's membership includes agencies that produce global change science, agencies that use it to carry out their missions, and some that do both (see Appendix I. USGCRP Member Agencies). Through USGCRP, agencies work together to advance global change research that addresses national needs, inform decisions to build resilience to the impacts of global change, and deliver products mandated by the GCRA, including the National Climate Assessment. As directed by the GCRA, USGCRP also promotes international coordination on global change research, which includes providing support for activities relating to U.S. participation in international scientific assessments (see Supporting International Global Change Research).

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 edition of USGCRP's annual report to Congress, *Our Changing Planet*, presents highlights of the Program's achievements in 2019, as well as a summary of agency expenditures under USGCRP's budget crosscut (see Budgetary Information), as required by the GCRA. USGCRP's scope includes but is not limited to the range of agency programs implemented with funds included in the budget crosscut, and the efforts described in this document represent a subset of the overall accomplishments of the Program. The highlighted activities represent interagency collaborations that rely on coordinated investments of two or more member agencies. Note that single agency investments, including many that enable interagency accomplishments, are not typically covered in this annual report. See Appendix I. USGCRP Member Agencies for more detail on the principal focus areas related to global change research for each member agency.

Figure 1: U.S. Global Change Research Program Member Agencies

- **Department of Agriculture**
- **Department of Commerce**
- **Department of Defense**
- **Department of Energy**
- **Department of Health and Human Services**
- **Department of the Interior**
- **Department of State**
- **Department of Transportation**
- **Environmental Protection Agency**
- **National Aeronautics and Space Administration**
- **National Science Foundation**
- **Smithsonian Institution**
- **U.S. Agency for International Development**

IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH PLAN

USGCRP's National Global Change Research Plan and its 2017 update provide a framework for advancing scientific understanding of the Earth system while strengthening capacity to answer questions critical to decision-making in a changing environment. The Program's four strategic goals, which respond to its mandate under the GCRA, are to advance global change science, inform decisions, conduct sustained assessments, and engage key stakeholders and audiences in support of these goals, including internationally. This section highlights achievements in 2019 that support implementation of USGCRP's goals and illustrate ongoing advances in the science of global change. Highlights are organized by overall science goals and program area. Activities undertaken in previous years are available at globalchange.gov/explore.

Advancing Science

Global change science brings together many disciplines to form a picture of our planet as a whole, including its changing climate. Integration across different approaches and areas of study, supported by interagency coordination through USGCRP, drives advances in our ability to observe, understand, and predict processes of change in the Earth system. Coordination across agencies with different missions facilitates the efficient use of Federal assets and resources to address high-priority science questions, contributing to ambitious research outcomes that require broad, sustained collaboration.

The research efforts highlighted in this section, drawn from diverse disciplines and methods within global change science, showcase advances in Earth system observations, modeling, and process understanding that provide the foundation for assessment and decision-support capabilities within and across agencies and beyond. Activities highlighted this year include an observing network that is providing insights into a changing Arctic (Highlight 1); complementary data analyses that confirm ongoing global surface temperature rise (Highlight 2); the development of a consistent framework for measuring greenhouse gas emissions at scales useful to policy decisions (Highlight 3); a campaign to investigate the impact of fire on air quality, human health, and climate (Highlight 4); and interagency modeling activities that support long-running efforts to project future climate change and inform major national and international climate assessments (Highlight 5).

Highlight 1. An observing network tracks changes in Arctic sea ice cover

Satellite observations show significant declines in Arctic sea ice cover in recent decades as the climate has warmed,[2] with impacts on fish and wildlife habitats that are important for subsistence, recreation, and tourist activities in the region. Retreating sea ice also contributes to increased storm surge, coastal flooding, and coastal erosion.[3] Arctic sea ice plays a key role in moderating climate within and beyond the region, and understanding sea ice change is critical to projections of future climate change. Complementary ground and remote sensing observations provide measurements of critical components of the Arctic sea ice system at the necessary range of spatial and temporal scales.

DoD's Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (CRREL) established a network of sensors installed in floating sea ice that provides near real-time access to data on ice thickness, temperature, and drift, as well as measurements from the surrounding ocean and atmosphere. The continuing 20-year record of quality-controlled observations offers valuable insight into the relationships among the air, ice, and sea, and can help attribute ice loss to specific causes.

The results of this NOAA-funded effort are delivered to publicly accessible archives at the National Snow and Ice Data Center and NSF's Arctic Data Center. These data provide a resource for understanding change in the Arctic and for validating remote measurements of sea ice cover, including satellite-based observations of ice thickness, depth of snow cover, and timing of ice melt and freeze-up. They also help improve understanding of the role of Arctic sea ice cover in the global climate system and contribute to improved projections of future ice conditions.

The use of observations from space, aircraft, and ground-based sensors allows scientists to monitor the Arctic system at different spatial and temporal scales. Efforts that make use of these complementary data enable improvements in understanding of sea ice processes and how they vary across scales, in remote sensing algorithms that detect change, and subsequently, in how models represent sea ice processes and future projections of how climate change will impact Arctic ice cover.

Highlight 2. Independent analyses provide a consistent picture of global surface temperature change

According to independent analyses by NASA and NOAA, Earth's average global surface temperature in 2019 was the second warmest since modern record-keeping began in 1880. Globally, 2019's average temperature was second only to that of 2016 and continued the planet's long-term warming trend. Rising temperatures are contributing to glacier melt, disappearing snow cover, shrinking sea ice, rising sea level, and changes in rainfall patterns.[4]

NOAA and NASA take slightly different, complementary approaches to interpreting global surface temperature, and work together to produce and communicate an annual update. NASA's temperature analyses incorporate surface temperature measurements from more than 20,000 weather stations, ship- and buoy-based observations of sea surface temperatures, and temperature measurements from Antarctic research stations. NOAA scientists incorporate much of the same temperature data as NASA, but use a different method of interpreting data from Earth's poles and other data-poor regions to translate the raw measurements into a global picture of temperature change. Together, the analyses provide a consistent picture of a warming planet.

A 2019 assessment of NASA's record of global surface temperatures found that improved uncertainty analysis, based on source data, suggests that the agency's estimate of Earth's long-term temperature rise in recent decades is accurate to within less than a tenth of a degree Fahrenheit. This finding provides greater confidence that past and future research is correctly capturing rising surface temperatures. The assessment of this data product, known as GISTEMP, shows that the resulting annual values (within the 95% confidence interval) are likely accurate to within 0.09°F (0.05°C) in recent decades, and 0.27°F (0.15°C) at the beginning of the nearly 140-year record.

Highlight 3. An international observing system sets a global framework for measuring greenhouse gas emissions

Long-term measurements of Earth's atmosphere show rapidly rising concentrations of greenhouse gases linked to human activities.[5] Existing observing networks provide information on atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at the global scale, but this spatial scale is not sufficient to help nations, regions, and other entities quantify and manage greenhouse gas emissions. To improve the relevance of emissions information for decision-making, an international initiative is promoting scientific methods that combine atmospheric concentration and emissions inventory data with simulations of atmospheric motions, forming a framework for more accurate and consistent emissions estimates over a range of spatial and temporal scales useful in informing policies, their implementation, and outcomes.

NASA, NOAA, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology have provided leadership and support for the development of the World Meteorological Organization Integrated Global Greenhouse Gas Information System (IG^{3}IS) initiative. The IG^{3}IS initiative seeks to enhance the capacity of nations, states, cities, and industries to target emissions reduction opportunities and track progress towards their goals. Success depends on the availability of atmospheric measurements in key greenhouse gas source regions, and relies on a multi-tiered observing strategy involving satellite, aircraft, mobile, and tower-based surface measurements.

Since gaining approval of its Science Implementation Plan in June 2018, IG^{3}IS has supported the creation of new projects under its national, subnational, and industrial foci, and has won endorsement for the use of its framework and methods by international organizations such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the Committee on Earth Observing Satellites. A key outcome from these efforts is that the IPCC Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories has published new guidelines for all countries detailing the value and use of atmospheric measurements-based information in their 2019 *Refinement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories*.

Highlight 4. An observing campaign investigates the impact of fires on air quality and climate

Fire risks to human health and property have increased in recent decades due to the impacts of a warmer, drier climate on ecosystems as well as historic land use and management practices. Smoke from wildfires in the western United States and agricultural fires in crop-producing regions such as the southeastern United States increasingly impacts air quality, with expected negative effects on human health.[6]

The impacts of smoke on atmospheric conditions depend on many factors: the kind of fuel being burned, weather and climate conditions at ignition, and how smoke moves through the atmosphere. To help improve understanding of how these conditions influence air quality, the summer 2019 FIREX-AQ (Fire Influence on Regional to Global Environments and Air Quality) field campaign brought together hundreds of scientists from NOAA, NASA, USDA Forest Service, and more than 40 additional partners to sample fire emissions in the northwestern and southeastern United States. Over two months, researchers used aircraft, satellite, and ground-based instrumentation to investigate the chemistry and fate of trace gases

A natural color image of the Williams Flats fire approaching the north bank of the Columbia River in eastern Washington, August 7, 2019, captured by the Operational Land Imager on the USGS/NASA Landsat 8 satellite. On August 8, FIREX-AQ researchers aboard NASA's DC-8 research plane sampled the composition and chemistry of the fire's smoke plume. Source: NASA Earth Observatory image by Joshua Stevens, using Landsat data from the USGS.

and aerosols in smoke from wildfires and agricultural fires. To investigate fires in more detail than any previous study—from the fuels on the ground to long-term climate impacts and everything in between—the multi-agency collaboration leveraged assets and resources from all partners involved in FIREX-AQ. Data from the campaign will be used to improve satellite-based estimates of emissions from wildfires and agricultural burns as well as understanding of the atmospheric impacts of fires. These advances will in turn improve climate and air quality models and help provide better information to public health and land management officials

Highlight 5. Modeling efforts drive advances in projections of future climate change

The U.S. research centers that develop climate and Earth system models and the U.S. scientific community are key participants in long-running collaborative efforts to improve knowledge on climate change. A number of major interagency activities supporting improvements in climate modeling took place in 2019.

Most prominently, the World Climate Research Programme Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP) is currently in its sixth phase (CMIP6). The earlier phases of CMIP experiments have provided the research community with large, detailed model-generated datasets that allow them to evaluate and improve various aspects of model performance and develop projections of future climate change. CMIP6 is the largest such modeling experiment so far, with a number of intercomparison projects that examine specific Earth system components and processes, including aerosol chemistry, detection and attribution of climate change, and the evaluation of and potential risks related to geoengineering, among many others.

Model output from CMIP6 and prior CMIPs will continue to be analyzed, validated, and used by the research community to improve future predictive models, allowing scientists and practitioners to develop and deliver much higher resolution climate projections at a global scale, and to better understand how the climate system functions and how it can be simulated with greater accuracy. The outcomes of analyses of CMIP6 model output will inform the next Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment report and the Fifth National Climate Assessment. Many U.S. modeling centers are participating in the CMIP6 effort, including the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR; primarily sponsored by NSF, with some additional support from NOAA, NASA, DOE, DoD, and the Federal Aviation Administration), DOE's Energy Exascale Earth System Model effort, NOAA's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory, and NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

CMIP6 datasets are already being used in a collaboration among NOAA, DOE, NSF, and other agencies to develop process-oriented diagnostics that help scientists understand and address model errors. Software was developed through a collaboration among scientists at NCAR, NOAA, DOE, and NASA laboratories, as well as academic institutions.

Collaboration on model development has also continued in the interagency space. One such activity initiated in 2019 involves scientists from NOAA, NASA, NCAR, and DOE, who are collaborating with the academic community on new Climate Process Team (CPT) efforts. These activities represent coordinated efforts by observational scientists, process theoreticians, and modelers to improve the representation of land surface and ocean processes in climate models. This CPT method of improving climate models was originally pioneered by NSF and has since expanded to a multi-agency consortium. CPT efforts have yielded significant advances in climate models through collaboration among Federal agencies and with the non-Federal scientific community. This work is also supportive of the U.S. Global Energy and Water Exchanges (GEWEX) effort coordinated through USGCRP.

Informing Decisions

USGCRP provides a venue for coordination and integration of efforts across the Federal Government to provide access to datasets, tools, and assessments that inform decisions related to all aspects of global change. Interagency science contributes to the development of authoritative, freely available information tools for responding to climate-related risks and opportunities, including the provision of information at scales that are useful for decision-making. Efforts highlighted this year include research and applications to support management of risks from harmful algal blooms (Highlight 6), the use of satellite data to track crop production (Highlight 7), information tools to support climate-resilient agriculture in the Midwest (Highlight 8), and activities focused on improving U.S. capacity to predict and communicate changes in risks of climate-sensitive diseases (Highlight 9).

Highlight 6. Research and decision tools support management of harmful algal blooms

Harmful algal blooms, or HABs, occur when colonies of cyanobacteria grow to a much greater size and density than normal, resulting in negative effects on water quality, ecosystem health, and the health of humans and animals. Climate-related factors contribute to HABs, including water temperatures and the frequency and intensity of extreme events such as intense storms, both of which are affected by climate change. The impacts of climate change are expected to further increase risks from HABs in recreational and drinking water sources in the coming decades.[7]

While researchers have identified many factors that contribute to HABs, how these factors come together to create a bloom of algae is not well understood. Interagency research efforts

An algal bloom in western Lake Erie, September 26, 2017, captured by the USGS/NASA Landsat 8 satellite. Brighter shades of green indicate a higher concentration of algae. Source: USGS/NASA.

seek to advance understanding of how and why HABs form to improve detection and forecasting of these seasonal events. Other efforts are using currently available data to provide communities with advance warning of events so they can prepare for the adverse environmental, economic, and health impacts of HABs.

Nutrient runoff from fertilizer applied to agricultural fields is one source of risk for HABs. USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is conducting a series of pond-scale experiments to evaluate how excess nitrogen and phosphorous affects the development of algal blooms at the ecosystem scale. ARS is also conducting field work to understand seasonal variability in environmental factors that influence algal blooms in agricultural water bodies. These efforts are critical to closing research gaps between understanding of the biological factors and the environmental conditions that influence algal growth rates, and will help resource managers predict and manage risk within agricultural water bodies. This research is conducted jointly with EPA and the USGS.

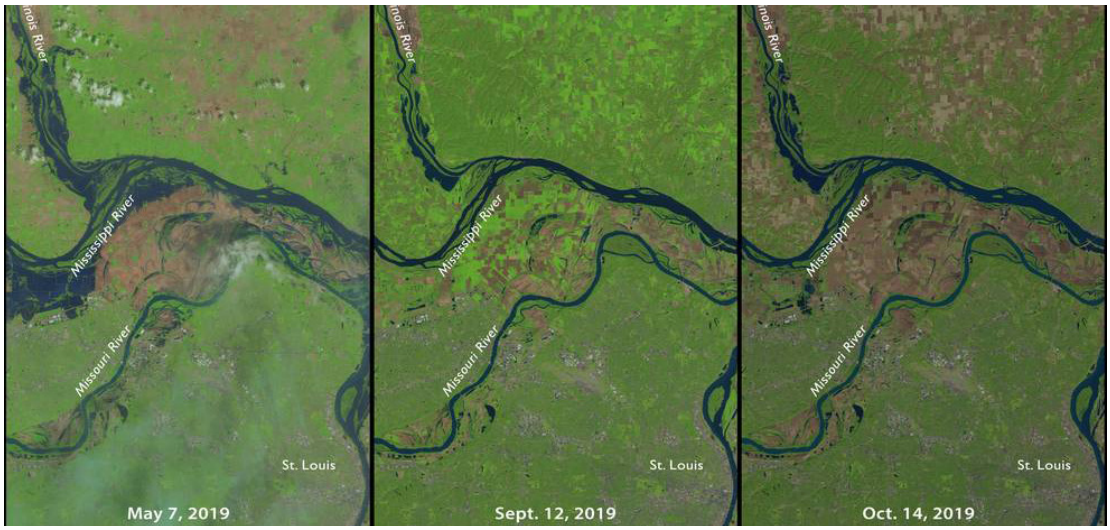
In a separate project, a regional network of agricultural fields and small watersheds is serving as an outdoor laboratory for ARS units in West Lafayette, Indiana and Columbus, Ohio, allowing researchers to quantify the impacts of human-caused and natural climate changes on nutrient runoff that fuels HAB formation in Lake Erie.[8 9 10] Assessment of long-term trends in precipitation, discharge, and water quality identified associated changes in rainfall patterns and land management practices that influence algal blooms. Research evaluating the uptake of nutrients by crops and the transport of water through the system, coupled with field-scale testing of novel conservation practices, has resulted in new strategies and recommendations for decreasing nutrient loss under current and future climatic conditions.[11] This research is conducted jointly with EPA and the USGS.

Like a weather forecast, an HAB forecast provides advance warning of conditions that could lead to potentially harmful algal blooms. EPA's Cyanobacteria Assessment Network Mobile Application (CyAN app) alerts officials and members of the public when an HAB may be forming, based on satellite observations of changes in water color. The app provides access to satellite algal bloom data for over 2,000 of the largest lakes and reservoirs across the United States.

The CyAN app is a product of the multi-agency Cyanobacteria Assessment Network, a collaboration among EPA, NASA, NOAA, and the USGS to develop an early warning indicator system using historical and current satellite data to detect algal blooms in U.S. freshwater systems.

Highlight 7. Satellite and ground data track status of the nation's food supply

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and Economic Research Service (ERS) track U.S. crop production each year, relying in large part on producer surveys and ground observations to estimate acreage and yields at state and county levels. During the growing season, production data inform estimates of crop acreage and yields that help farmers and traders set prices. Satellite data offer a useful method for validating statistics collected on the ground, and can help fill in gaps in ground observations, particularly in years where planting is delayed or disrupted due to weather or climate extremes.



Three moments in a year of farming north of St. Louis, Missouri, as seen in USGS/NASA Landsat 8 data. On the left is May 7, 2019, as heavy rains delayed planting for many farms. September 12, in the middle, shows bright green signifying growing vegetation, although with a fair amount of brown, bare fields. On the right, October 14, the light brown indicates harvested fields, while darker brown indicates fields that had not been seeded or were fallow all summer. Source: USGS/NASA.

NASS uses data from the USGS/NASA Landsat 8 and the European Union Copernicus Sentinel 2 A/B satellites, which provide data at a fine enough scale to distinguish individual fields, to identify where particular crops are growing. Sensors aboard NASA's Aqua and Terra satellites also monitor daily vegetation health and growth stage, which are indicators of crop yield. For example, in 2019, heavy spring rains flooded millions of acres of cropland around the Mississippi, Wisconsin, and Missouri Rivers, delaying planting for many farmers. Landsat 8 and Sentinel 2 data helped NASS state officials observe which fields and areas were most impacted by the floods and determine which fields had planted crops.

NASS's Cropland Data Layer datasets are released to the public at the end of each year. The site's historic data are used by disaster managers to evaluate crop damage from floods and other natural disasters. Resource managers also use historic data to monitor crop rotation, study land-use change and crop migration, and monitor water use.

Highlight 8. An ongoing partnership provides climate information to agricultural producers

The U.S. Midwest is a major producer of a wide range of food and animal feed for national consumption and international trade. Higher humidity, precipitation, and temperatures associated with a changing climate increasingly impact agriculture in the region, and projected climate changes are expected to pose growing challenges to agricultural productivity in the coming decades.[12]

Weather and climate information targeted to the needs of agricultural producers can help producers increase the resilience of their operations to climate variability and change. USDA's Midwest Climate Hub works closely with NOAA's National Weather Service to collect and supply weather and climate-related information that is useful and usable for agricultural producers in the region. Together, USDA and NOAA continuously assess current conditions and upcoming situations, including weather-related disasters, and communicate tailored information to help producers prepare for and recover from climate-related events.

In addition to regular webinars and meetings with users, recent examples of this partnership include the Extreme Cold Snap brief (January 2019), Post-Bomb Cyclone Recovery list of resources (March 2019), and a special weather event webinar on flooding and precipitation impacts on agriculture (June 2019). These communications also connect users with region-specific information and resources provided by university agricultural extension services, state and Federal disaster relief agencies, and other science-based information and tools created by regional and national partners.

Highlight 9. Interagency activities inform efforts to predict and prepare for climate-sensitive infectious diseases

Climate-sensitive infectious diseases, including vector-borne diseases (such as dengue, West Nile Virus, and Chikungunya), waterborne diseases (such as those caused by *Vibrio* species), soil- and dust-borne diseases (such as Valley Fever), and zoonotic diseases (such as plague and avian influenza) pose threats to the health of Americans living at home and abroad. These threats are anticipated to change in distribution and severity as climate change progresses in the coming decades. Improving U.S. capacity to predict and communicate changes in risks of climate-sensitive diseases, including translation of predictions into decision-support tools, is key to managing future disease risks in a changing climate.

In April 2019, USGCRP's Interagency Crosscutting Group on Climate Change and Human Health (CCHHG) published a summary report, *Predicting Climate-Sensitive Infectious Diseases to Protect Public Health and Strengthen National Security*, that represented the culmination of a series of webinars and a workshop exploring this challenge. The webinars and workshops were led by a steering committee that included members from USGCRP's Interagency Group on Integrative Modeling and the CCHHG as well as the interagency Pandemic Prediction and Forecasting Science and Technology Working Group.

The report highlights current efforts and outlines a path forward for increasing the U.S. Government's ability to predict, prevent, and prepare for climate-sensitive infectious diseases that threaten U.S. interests at home and abroad. For example, the Rift Valley Fever Monitor and related Emerging Risk Notification, produced by DoD, NASA, and USDA, provide a model for what could be done regularly to manage other emerging climate-sensitive disease risks in the future. The analysis and frameworks represented in the report informed several follow-on activities within USGCRP and its member agencies. For example, the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NOAA, and DoD have begun collaborating to develop seasonal forecasting products to inform health decision-making. In another example, the DOS partnered with experts from HHS, USAID, NOAA, State and local governments, and the non-governmental sector to deliver several international information-sharing programs focused on the use of Integrated Information Systems—a key concept in the report—in 2018 and 2019. An Integrated Information System is a framework designed to ensure that environmental, socioeconomic, health, and other variables are combined to provide useful information for early warnings and promote sound health-related risk management.

In addition, in response to the report's recommendations, and in partnership with USGCRP's International Activities Interagency Working Group, NOAA's International Research and Applications Program and the NSF supported research grants focused on predicting climate-sensitive infectious diseases. This research funding was further leveraged as part of the global Belmont Forum's Collaborative Research Action on Climate, Environment and Health.

Conducting Sustained Assessments

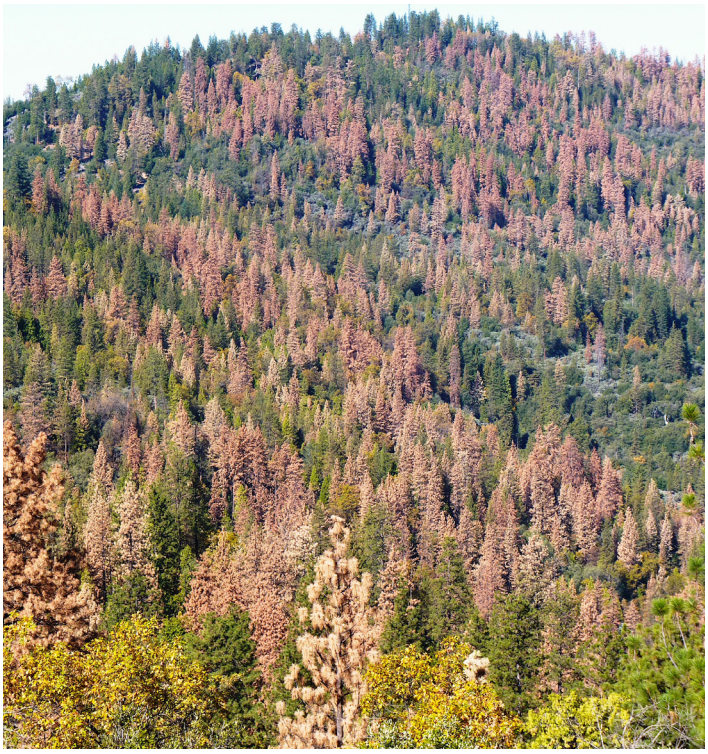
The Global Change Research Act directs USGCRP to produce quadrennial assessments of current scientific understanding on global change, including projections of future climate conditions and ongoing and potential impacts on society in the United States. USGCRP approaches assessment as a sustained process that enables scientists and stakeholders to address issues of emerging importance on an ongoing basis while improving the thoroughness of the quadrennial report. Focused assessment reports on topics such as the impacts of drought (Highlight 10) as well as ongoing efforts including an interagency climate-relevant indicators web platform (Highlight 11) and efforts to develop indicators of socio-environmental change (Highlight 12) provide valuable input to the National Climate Assessment, and serve individual agency and interagency constituencies.

Highlight 10. A new assessment links the latest drought science with management responses

Most regions of the United States are projected to experience a higher frequency of severe droughts and longer dry periods as a result of a warming climate.[13] In 2016, USDA Forest Service (USDA-FS) scientists and partners prepared a state-of-the-science synthesis of drought effects on the nation's forests designed to inform drought resilience and adaptation efforts. A new volume released in 2019 builds on that work, linking recent scientific evidence with regionally focused discussions of risks, vulnerabilities, and management options to minimize drought impacts, optimize forest and rangeland recovery from drought, and create forests and rangelands better adapted to future drought conditions.

Drought conditions and impacts vary across the United States, and evaluating management options requires a regionally specific approach. The new volume includes seven regional chapters (Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, California, Hawai'i and U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands, Interior West, Great Plains, Northeast and Midwest, and Southeast) that provide a state-of-the-science assessment of drought effects and region-specific management options to help natural resource managers anticipate and respond to current and future droughts.

The interagency effort led by USDA-FS involved researchers from the USGS, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, NOAA, and USDA's Agricultural Research Service. This assessment product will provide input to USGCRP's sustained assessment process, including the Fifth National Climate Assessment.



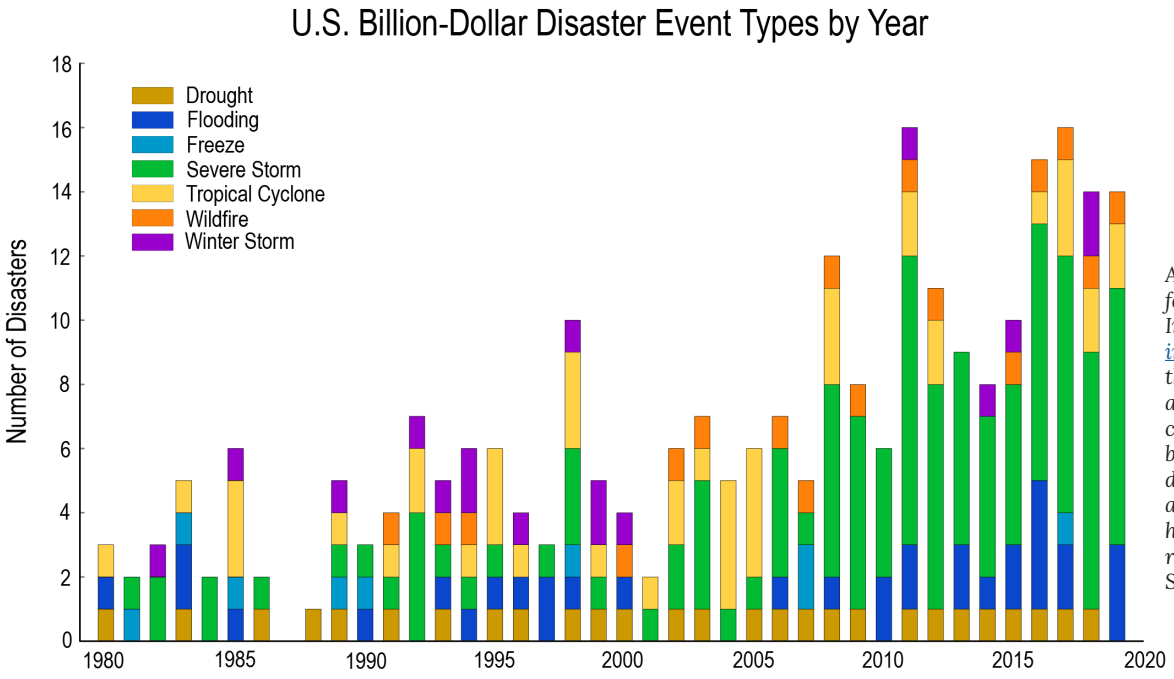
Tree mortality at Bass Lake Recreation Area, California. A five-year drought in California (2011–2016) led to western pine beetle outbreaks, which contributed to the mortality of 129 million trees. Credit: Marc Meyer, U.S. Forest Service; NCA4, Ch. 6: Forests, Figure 6.2.

Highlight 11. An interagency platform highlights important indicators of change

Climate indicators show trends over time in key aspects of our environment, such as greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere, temperatures across land and sea, and the extent of Arctic sea ice, as well as metrics of social or economic exposure to the impacts of climate variability and change. Indicators are based on long-term, consistently collected data and can be used to assess risks and vulnerabilities from a changing climate and to inform response actions. USGCRP's Indicators Interagency Working Group (IndIWG) leverages existing agency research, data, and indicators in support of sustained assessment activities, including the National Climate Assessment.

IndIWG launched an interagency web platform for USGCRP to highlight federally supported climate-relevant indicators (see figure for example) and programs and integrate information from the Fourth National Climate Assessment (NCA4), including a figure depicting climate-relevant trends across the United States that was developed for the NCA4 Volume II Overview chapter. The platform provides readily accessible, well-documented climate information and is well positioned to support sustained assessment activities, including the addition of new indicators, routine data updates, and a range of communication activities.

The IndIWG and the indicators web platform represent an interagency collaboration with participation and input from many USGCRP member agencies, including the DOI, EPA, HHS, NASA, NOAA, NSF, and USDA, as well as USGCRP interagency working groups.



An example indicator featured on the USGCRP Indicator Platform. This indicator shows, by year, the number of weather and climate disasters causing more than one billion U.S. dollars in direct losses. These events are binned into seven hazard types, each represented by its own color. Source: USGCRP.

Highlight 12. A collaboration explores socio-environmental systems indicators for climate change adaptation and resilience

A national system of physical, ecological, and societal indicators is considered a foundational component of the sustained assessment process, serving to help users understand the changing environment, assess risks and vulnerabilities, and make informed decisions to build resilience to change. A 2019 Federal–academic workshop sought to advance the development of socio-environmental systems indicators of climate change to support adaptation and resilience decisions at various scales in the United States.

This work was supported by the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC) under funding received from NSF. Nineteen participants from Federal agencies (EPA, NOAA, USDA Forest Service), academia, State, and non-governmental organizations convened at SESYNC headquarters in Annapolis, Maryland, on May 15–17, 2019. Participants discussed strategies for integrating social and environmental data into indicators, and shared perspectives on how to build robust resilience knowledge and better address the needs of people doing resilience and adaptation projects when designing indicators for use in decision-making.

Supporting International Global Change Research

As part of its legislative mandate, USGCRP works to improve coordination of U.S. activities with the programs of other nations and international organizations in order to promote international cooperation on global change research and build global change research capacity in developing countries. To advance these goals, USGCRP develops international partnerships that support the priorities and objectives of the USGCRP community, link to USGCRP's program areas, and build on existing agency investments and resources (Highlight 13).

Highlight 13. USGCRP enhances cooperation among international global change science organizations

USGCRP's International Activities Interagency Working Group (IAIWG) convened its first international and interagency workshop in December 2018, bringing together representatives from System for Analysis, Research and Training (START), Future Earth, and the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP). These three international programs receive funding through USGCRP to support their activities and to advance USGCRP's international mandate. USGCRP was represented by ten Federal agencies as well as USGCRP staff. The workshop's goals were to enhance awareness of mutual priorities, investments, and activities; and to identify areas where coordination could be most beneficial. Outcomes from this meeting include improved communications among USGCRP and the three international organizations supported by the Program.

In November 2019, the IAIWG hosted a follow-on briefing between USGCRP member agencies, START, Future Earth, WCRP, and the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research to further strengthen coordination among these organizations and establish a foundation for the regular convening of USGCRP and the international programs it supports. Outcomes from the 2019 briefing included increased awareness of the international organizations' priorities and activities and information-gathering exercises to identify specific coordination opportunities.

Open data initiatives were highlighted as potential areas for future cross-collaboration, including preparations for a data assimilation network and a Tropospheric Ozone Assessment Report coordinated by WCRP, NOAA, and NASA. The group also agreed to establish an understanding of the current programming and activity landscape through development of a cross-organizational list of current and planned activities. This activity is ongoing.